

1500 - TRAVEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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1. Explanation of Material Transmitted: The material transmitted contains amended language in line with the travel policies and procedures contained in NIH Manual 1500 Chapter 02-01 "Travel Management System". The change highlights the need to adhere to all Actual Expense Allowance (AEA) requirements in a scenario where a Housing Bureau or other sponsoring entity has booked rooms for a conference in advance, and the rate is more than 25% over the lodging portion of the per diem allowance in a particular geographic area. In this case, you may not automatically bypass the TMC in the procurement of your lodging accommodations.

2. Filing Instructions:

Under NIH MC 1500, Chapter 02-01(D)2(a) - After the parenthetical ending with the words Sponsored Travel, insert the following:

NOTE: If the local Housing Bureau or other entity has reserved the rooms such that the rate exceeds the lodging per diem allowance for the area by *over* 25%, Actual Expense Allowance (AEA) requirements must be adhered to (See NIH Manual 1500, Chapter 04-06), before you bypass the TMC. (A Conference Lodging Allowance should be applied when the rate is *up to* 25% over the lodging portion of the per diem allowance for the area.)

PLEASE NOTE: For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the Office of Financial Management on 301-435-2927
- NIH Manual System, contact the Office of Management Assessment, OA on 301-496-2832

On-line information, enter this URL:

<http://www1.od.nih.gov/manualchapters/management/1500/>

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1500-02-00 - Traveler Responsibilities

A. General

The following directive provides information and guidance regarding NIH policies and procedures pertaining to official travel, its authorization and performance, and submission of claims for reimbursement of expenses. It is intended to assist *civilian employees* who are required to travel in the performance of their duties, as well as personnel responsible for the administration of travel regulations.

B. Documentation - Travel Orders

1. ***Travel Authorizations (Orders):*** All NIH personnel must submit a Travel Order (HHS-1), for prior approval of the authorizing official. Travelers also must have the recommending (signature) of his/her immediate supervisor indicating they are aware of an impending trip by an employee under their supervision. This "in-house" clearance aids administrative and budget offices in controlling funds for multiple travel submissions and from multiple funding sources.
2. ***Authorization for travel, transportation, and other expenses – transfer of official duty station.*** The HHS-1 (Travel Order) is the form used to obligate funds and to authorize payment or repayment of expenses in connection with a permanent change of official duty station. The employee will receive the original of this form. After such approval is received, the employee may make arrangements and other commitments as authorized and necessary for the transportation cost of self, immediate family, and household goods; and incur other expenses as authorized. For the preparation and authorization of travel documents, refer to NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 09 (**pending release**).
3. ***Emergency situations.*** Travel may be performed without prior authorization only in case of emergency. In such instances, travel shall be "approved" rather than authorized. However, it is the traveler's responsibility to include in his/her claim for reimbursement a justification statement acceptable to the supervisor and the approving official ratifying the travel. When travel is not properly authorized, the traveler will be required to absorb the cost of transportation and other expenses incurred.

Types of travel orders:

- a. **A trip-by-trip authorization** is the preferred means for authorizing travel. It specifies the time period in which the travel is to be performed, the purpose, the itinerary, and the estimated cost.
- b. **An unlimited open authorization** permits an individual to travel without further authorization under certain specified conditions. Its use is expressly discouraged and will be permitted only if the issuance of a trip-by-trip order is not feasible. Travel orders must state realistic limitations covering the specific purpose of such travel, geographic area, travel duration, and cost. This type of order is valid only for the trip's stated purpose. Employees who hold this order must use a trip-by-trip order for any travel outside the conditions of the limited open authorization.
- c. **Conditions for issuing a limited open authorization** are as follows: the employee (a) is required, as part of his or her work assignment, to make at least three trips per month or spend an average of more than ten days per

month in travel status incident to rendering service or supervising activities in a restricted geographic area, and (b) must frequently embark on trips to this geographic area on his or her own initiative and consequently would not have the time or opportunity to obtain orders setting forth more specifically the travel to be performed as well as the specific purpose of the trip and its expected duration. For more complete information, see HHS Travel Manual Chapter 3-00-20.

- d. **An unlimited open authorization** permits an individual to travel for any purpose without further authorization. This type of authorization is reserved for the Secretary and designated DHHS officials only. (HHS Travel Manual Chapter 3-00-20).
- e. **No Expense to the Government Travel (NETG) Order** permits an individual to be in a TDY location while performing official government business that is related to the employee's position and the mission of the NIH. NIH involvement is limited and there are no financial transactions effected. In accordance with GSA regulations, an employee cannot be authorized nor is he or she allowed to use contract city-pair fares for the travel. Further, an employee is neither permitted to use the Government contractor-issued charge card nor is the NIH to pay for the trip with Government funds and then have the employee reimburse the NIH.

NOTE: Under certain circumstances, NIH policy permits the payment of a registration fee for e.g., a training course, when the employee agrees to pay for the remainder of the costs associated with the trip.

- 5. ***Purposes of travel.*** All NIH employee's travel authorization(s) and the associated travel voucher(s) shall specify clearly the purpose(s) of the travel. To establish uniformity in the way that travel purposes are identified on the travel authorization and travel voucher, NIH Manual Chapter 1935 – Object Classification Codes (pending release) establishes the following codes for travel purposes within the **Domestic United States**. (See Foreign Travel Codes in NIH Manual Issuance 1500 [Chapter 07](#)).

- a. **21.11 - Site Visit.** Travel to a particular site in order to perform operational or managerial activities (e.g., to oversee program activities, grant operations, or management activities for internal control purposes; carry out an audit, inspection, or repair activity; conduct negotiations; provide instructions; or provide technical assistance).
- b. **21.21 - Information Meeting.** Travel to attend a meeting to discuss general Agency operations, review status reports, or discuss topics of general interest. If a site visit was conducted as part of the same trip, consider the entire trip to be for the purpose of a site visit.
- c. **21.31 - Speech or Presentation.** Travel to make a speech or a presentation, deliver a paper, or otherwise take part in a formal program other than a training course.
- d. **21.41 - Training Attendance.** Travel to receive training
- e. **21.51 - Conference Attendance.** Travel to attend a conference, convention, seminar, or symposium for purposes of observation or education only, with no formal role in the proceedings.

- f. **25.2W – Registration Fees.** Tuition and registration fees via the NIH Integrated Training System (NIHITS) or by other authorized means – training courses, seminars, conferences and workshops (excludes advisory and assistance services for administrative/technical support for conferences and training programs recorded under 25.10 and IT training recorded under 25.AC).

NOTE: Government travel to a conference/meeting in *Canada, Mexico, Central America, Bermuda, and the Caribbean areas sponsored by a U.S. organization which normally holds its meetings in the United States* must be coded with a Domestic O.C. Code on the Foreign Travel ADB system.

6. **Cost estimates.** Travel authorizations shall include estimates of the cost of the travel. Limited open authorizations shall also include an estimate of the travel costs to be incurred over the period covered by the authorization. Agencies shall use these estimates to obligate the funds necessary to carry out the particular travel and to improve travel budgetary controls.
7. **Request for travel authorization (HHS-1).** Travelers must prepare, or have prepared, the HHS-1 Travel Order prior to the date official travel is to begin. This is the official document giving written authorization of trip:

- a. Itinerary,
- b. Approximate inclusive dates,
- c. Official purpose,
- d. Mode of transportation,
- e. Allowable per diem, and
- f. Estimated miscellaneous expenses.

NOTE: Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business are not acceptable. Employees will be held responsible for excess costs and any additional expenses solely incurred for personal preference or convenience.

8. **Travel Arrangements Which Require Specific Authorization or Prior Approval.**

Use of premium-class service on common carrier transportation; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 [Chapter 03](#))

- a. Use of premium-class service on common carrier transportation; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 03)
- b. Use of a foreign air carrier; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 03)
- c. Use of reduced fares for group or charter arrangements; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 03)

- d. Use of cash to pay for emergency or non-emergency common carrier transportation services in excess of \$100; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 03)
- e. Use of extra-fare train service; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 03)
- f. Use of a rental car; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 03)
- g. Payment of a reduced per diem rate; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 [Chapter 04](#))
- h. Payment of actual expense; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 04)
- i. Travel expenses related to emergency travel; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 [Chapter 02](#))
- j. Travel expenses related to travel to a foreign area; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 04)
- k. Acceptance of payment from a non-Federal source for travel expenses; (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 08) (**pending release**), and
- l. Travel expenses related to attendance at a conference, meeting, or similar function. (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 02)
- m. Approval of per diem at NIH local area. (See NIH Manual Issuance 1500 [Chapter 06](#))

9. *Distribution*

- a. Original copy retained by traveler.
- b. One copy to be submitted (or faxed) to the Travel Agent for issuance of the transportation ticket.
- c. One copy retained by the authorizing official (Administrative Officer and/or Budget Officer).
- d. Other copies may be kept by the initiating office and/or the recommending official.

10. *Amending the travel authorization (Order)*. Travelers are responsible for corrections to their orders if travel arrangements change after the original order is submitted. The preparing office can amend the Travel Order on the automated ADB system and re-submit it to the authorizing official. In some instances, re-authorization (another set of signatures) will be required. Common situations requiring an amendment:

- a. Changing original dates by more than 2 days;
- b. Adding another duty station;
- c. Changing mode of transportation;
- d. Payment of a registration fee;
- e. Adding a rental car;
- f. Acceptance of payments from non-Federal sources;
- g. Errors in demographic information such as, name, address, official duty station, EIN/SSN, etc.; and
- h. Errors in accounting data such as CAN numbers, OC Codes, etc.

NOTE: To effect a change (amendment) to the travel order, use the "Change

Function" (CHG) in accordance with the guidelines in the ADB User's Guide.

11. ***Canceling an authorization (Order).*** Travelers must notify their agency as soon as possible when a planned trip is canceled to avoid potential liability for costs which have already been incurred (e.g. tickets, registration fee payments, etc.). Travelers are accountable for all transportation tickets issued in their name and any other transportation procurement documents received by them in connection with their official travel. If the traveler does not notify the appropriate official accordingly, and the NIH incurs expenses, the traveler will be required to absorb the cost.
 - a. The preparing office must cancel the travel document on the NIH ADB system. In some instances, (e.g, when the travel is being canceled after the departure date) the Travel Voucher will have to be submitted for "0" dollars and the transportation ticket returned to the Travel Agent for proper reimbursement to the Government.
 - b. Travelers bear the responsibility for clearing travel advances. Advances issued from an ATM must be repaid to the credit card agency by the traveler at bill-paying time. Government advances issued by direct deposit to the traveler's designated financial institution must be reimbursed by personal check or money order made payable to the "National Institutes of Health".

C. Documentation - Travel Vouchers

1. ***Vouchering for travel reimbursement.*** It is the traveler's responsibility to submit all receipts and claims for travel expenses within 5 working days after the conclusion of a trip so that travel vouchers may be prepared accurately.

NOTE: To effect a change (amendment) to a travel voucher, use the "Voucher Function" (VCH) as outlined in the ADB User's Guide and enter actual expenses incurred including those that may be approved after the fact in accordance with the FTR.

2. ***Receipt requirements.*** Federal Regulations 301-11.25, 301-52.2, and 301-52.4 set forth the requirements for documentation supporting all travel (including travel incident to a permanent change of duty station) expense claims. They are listed as follows:
 - a. Mandatory receipts
 - Lodging
 - Common carrier transportation (receipts, passenger coupons, or other appropriate documentation to support claim)
 - Registration fees
 - Shipments or freight expenses
 - b. Claims without a supporting receipt unless the individual expenses exceeds the \$75 threshold
 - Hire of special conveyances, including rental cars and taxis
 - Excess baggage
 - Fees relating to travel outside Continental United States (CONUS) (i.e.,

- currency exchange fees, traveler's check fees, etc.)
- Operating expenses of a privately owned vehicle
- Rental of rooms for official business
- Long-distance telephone calls
- Personal services (interpreters, guides, drivers, etc.)
- Clerical assistance
- Copying services
- Other reasonable expenses deemed warranted by authorizing official to conduct official business.

NOTE: For a complete listing, see NIH Manual Issuance 1500 [Chapter 04-07](#)

3. ***Certification by traveler.*** The signature of the traveler on the Travel Voucher certifies the accuracy of all items being claimed, and that each claim was used in conducting official business. The validity of a signed voucher, or any part thereof, is the responsibility of the traveler.
4. ***Penalty.*** A penalty is provided by law for the presentation of a fraudulent claim. The falsification of any single claim may warrant the disallowance of the voucher and additional disciplinary action including: reprimand; suspension; or other appropriate actions. Accordingly, care should be exercised in the preparation and review, prior to signature, to insure that the voucher is correct in its entirety and does not include items of personal expense.

1500-02-01 - Travel Management System:

- A. **General.** Effective January 1, 2001, with certain exceptions, General Services Administration (GSA) regulations require NIH staff to use the Travel Management System (TMS) selected by NIH for all common carrier, lodging, and rental car services.

NOTE: This includes electronic travel management services and commercial travel agents under contract to GSA or another Federal agency.

- B. **Authority.** FTR 301-73.102 provides that you must use the TMS selected by NIH for all travel management services, commercial passenger transportation services e.g., airlines, rental cars, trains, etc. and travel payment system services i.e., Government contractor-issued individually billed cards or a centrally billed account. In line with HHS Travel Manual Chapter 3-30-10 "Mandatory Use of Government Travel Management Services for Reservations" (pending release), **if you use an unauthorized travel agent or unauthorized travel management system, you will be responsible for any additional costs that are the direct result of the unauthorized use and assuming such costs would not have been incurred if the NIH TMS had been used.**
- C. **Policy.** Transportation, lodging, and rental car services should be obtained at or below the Government rate. If circumstances prevent obtaining Government rates, you should have specific authorization or prior approval for expenses incurred that are in excess of the

Federal Travel Regulation (See FTR 301-2.5). All travelers must procure their transportation tickets, lodging, and rental car services through the Travel Management Center in place (i.e., World Travel Service (WTS)) unless you meet one of the following exceptions:

NOTE: Travel arrangement requirements for Commissioned Officers may be accessed in the Joint Federal Travel Regulations in Chapter 3 U3120 at the following web site:

<http://www.dtic.mil/perdiem/jftr.html>

D. Exceptions.

1. Transportation tickets.

- a. When an organization, association, society, etc., in connection with your attendance at an event, has negotiated airline tickets with another travel agency and you are instructed to contact either the entity or the travel agency to obtain your tickets. This exception may be applied in scenarios where either appropriated funds are being used or where a nonfederal source is providing the tickets "In Cash" or "In Kind" (HHS-348 Sponsored Travel).
- b. When you arrive at the airport and an "E" Ticket reservation has not been recorded in the system.
- c. When you are required to travel on official Government business on an emergency basis or because of another exigency.
- d. When you are unable to reach the Travel Management Center staff due to, for example, a natural disaster or other happenstance i.e., power failure.

2. Lodging.

- a. When you are attending an event, and a local Housing Bureau, subsidiary company, etc. has secured all of the lodging accommodations and you are instructed to contact the entity to obtain your lodging. This exception may be applied in scenarios where either appropriated funds are being used or where a nonfederal source is providing the accommodations "In Cash" or "In Kind" (HHS-348 Sponsored Travel). **NOTE:** If the local Housing Bureau or other entity has reserved the rooms such that the rate exceeds the lodging per diem allowance for the area by *over 25%*, Actual Expense Allowance (AEA) requirements must be adhered to (see NIH Manual 1500, Chapter 04-06), before you bypass the TMC. (A Conference Lodging Allowance should be applied when the rate is *up to 25%* over the lodging portion of the per diem allowance for the area.)
- b. When you are attending a sponsored event where the lodging accommodations have been prepaid by the sponsoring organization.
- c. When you are attending an event where it is necessary for you to stay in non-Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved accommodations. Should this occur, the appropriate delegated official must annotate that such accommodations are necessary on a copy of the Travel Order and sign accordingly (See NIH Manual 1130 Delegations of Authority Travel No. 17, pending release).

- d. When you are required to travel on official Government business on an emergency basis or because of another exigency.
- e. When you are unable to reach the Travel Management Center staff due to, for example, a natural disaster or other happenstance i.e., power failure.
- f. When employees travel by privately owned vehicle to attend long-term training and do not know precisely where they will be staying overnight both, on the way to the training site and on the return trip from the training site.

NOTE: Federal Advisory Council members are exempt from mandatory use of the Travel Management Center for procurement of lodging services.

3. Rental Cars.

- a. When you are required to travel on official Government business on an emergency basis or because of another exigency.
- b. When you are unable to reach the Travel Management Center staff due to, for example, a natural disaster or other happenstance i.e., power failure.

NOTE: Federal Advisory Council members are exempt from mandatory use of the Travel Management Center for procurement of rental car services.

E. Management Information Requirements. The Travel Management System should provide the following information:

- 1. Number of reservations by type of service (common carrier, lodging, and car rental);
- 2. Policy compliance and reasons for exceptions;
- 3. Origin and destination points of common carrier use;
- 4. Destination points for lodging accommodations (including name of lodging place;
- 5. Number of lodging nights in approved accommodations;
- 6. City or location where car rentals are obtained (including name of rental car company; and
- 7. Other tasks, e.g., reconciliation of charges on centrally billed accounts, processing ticket refunds, etc.

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